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C O N F E R E N C E

B U L L E T I N

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POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONAL REPORT

In my welcome I said that we are gathered here for a historic occasion. The history is not out of any book. It will first be made here when the decision to issue a paper under our own power will have proven what has been evident for the past two months --that is to say, that the workers themselves are taking the leadership in establishing their own paper and building their own organization. Its start was this: when faced with a split on the part of the majority of the intellectuals, the worker-leaders and the workers in the ranks, instead of retreating, said: "Good, we'll go it alone because we know that other workers will soon join us. Starting from scratch all over again may be hard, but at least this paper will have our purpose."

That is a very different attitude than what seemed to be the case when the struggle first burst into the open and the feeling of the proletarians seemed to be: "Not another factional struggle! I don't know that I could go through another split."

What happened to bring about a total change is in itself the answer to the question in the heads and on the lips of all liberal and radical skeptics --can the workers take leadership into their own hands?

In the present case the aim, purpose, and method of the non-working class side went so much against the grain of the workers that their slaps instinct literally overnight matured into political leadership.

On the face of it this may seem to be of concern to no one but those involved, much less any substantial part of the working class: the opposite is the case.

The objective truth is that so total is the crisis of present-day society, so fed-up are the working people -- and I am including among them not alone the rank and file workers but the Negroes, the women, the youth and even the middle class that has no connection with any of the two bureaucracies -- American and Russian -- fighting for world power -- so fed-up I repeat, are the working people with the present system of production where they are nothing but cogs in a machine, with the labor bureaucracy whose main concern is how to discipline labor whenever it strikes out on its own, and with the present administration which is daily blundering into war, so utterly in revolt are they against all this that it would take very little to unloose a torrent which would change all relations, beginning with the relations of men to men at the point of production.

There is only one thing that is holding back the torrent and that is the lack of confidence workers have in themselves, that they and they alone can do it.

So that, what happened among 70 people illuminates what is happening in the world as a whole. The story of what happened to this small organization that the workers suddenly found themselves in the lead, and set its own course whether in the leadership or in the ranks, is of the greatest concern to the workers as a whole for only the confidence in themselves will break the stranglehold of all leaders, including radical groupings who are always ready to tell the workers what they should do and never listening to workers, what they want done.

In this category of radical groupings not listening to workers either on the outside or in their own organization must now be included the former NEB majority and he who instigated the action, J.R. Johnson.

Heretofore, even in the CORRESPONDENCE group which prided itself on making the proletariat the centre of all its thinking and action and began even to publish a paper that was written not "for" workers but by them, the attitude of the workers, and that includes the workers who sat, and only sat, in the leadership, the attitude of the workers toward politics was this, well you had to be a member of this group because it is the only who stood for a fundamental transformation of society. The organizational job "until the day action was on the order of the day," however, they left pretty much to the intellectuals, the theoreticians and organizers.

As Milton put it recently: until the fight broke out WE WERE ISOLATED PEOPLE sitting together.

But as soon as the move to split the organization, the workers both in the NEB and in the ranks, rose up, spoke in a way they themselves did not know they could, and showed that they never intended to "be driven into isolation" from their shopmates and worker friends on the outside.

Now that is what is NEW, really new in here and in the world at large for such developments cannot occur EXCEPT WHEN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES ARE SHAKING SOCIETY TO ITS DEPTHS. What happened among us reflects what is happening in the world around us, waiting to be born. It will pay us to go into detail.

It was Johnson who chose to attack the National Chairman at the very time the bourgeoisie attacked.

Johnson is a man of purpose. Contrary however to the purpose of the working class, this man of purpose is not stopped by any acts of the class enemy which seem to go in the same direction as he. He is a man who thinks and plans a lot before he undertakes an action -- for this he has been preparing a year and more-- but he doesn't stop to think of its consequences, nor will he be deterred even though the proletarian majority of the leadership of the organization tells him to cease and desist. I doubt that the pull of the objective forces of an alien class upon him was clear even to himself. At any rate though I thought it I was not ready to say, this is what it was.

What I did decide to do when I was suddenly confronted with the barrage of letters telling me the end of my 25 years in the working-class movement has come to a "miserable end" and I must, without seeing the political positions he had worked out, capitulate in advance to Neff and Kaufman who would carry out "the new politics," -- the only thing I decided to do was to turn to the duly established political body -- the REB -- instead of the appointed clique of two. There the worker-editor promptly put a class stamp on the matter. He said these letters are sheer demagoguery, the worst enemy of the workingclass.

When Johnson was instructing his adherents to proceed ruthlessly to remove me without any statement of political difference having been presented because he said it was "only" -- an organizational question, the highest political body in the organization asks what politics motivates such a move?

Thus the mere step of consultation with a duly constituted body, and not a clique of two designated by a third, immediately raised the question to a political level. No political answer came from abroad.

But, again, we had a pretty good organizational demonstration of what was called the "new form of leadership." Kaufman stamped the membership, and, not governed by any laws of procedure whatever, usurped the function of the REB. This brought Milton to the fore who simply and bluntly called her actions "Stalinist."

Thus the second entry of a proletarian leader into what at first appeared as a fight between two intellectuals concretized the class designation as that of totalitarians who destroy what they cannot control.

The third layer person who sits in on the REB compared the previous silence of Kaufman and the present frantic behavior with what goes on in the shop in its systematized attempt to intimidate workers, and how workers resist it.

The most worked out analysis of the whole behavior of this treacherous opposition has been made by the third worker on the REB. I trust everyone has read Harpor's letter to Lee. Not only read it, but studied it, for it is a masterpiece of Bolshevism and dialectics, that is to say of uncompromising class politics and philosophy.

He made his point of departure that, first of all, "correct" politics wouldn't save us from the fate of the old radical organizations when isolation from the workingclass brought to their doom. "If we could not attract workers we would go the way of the Trotskyists." He then showed that because the actual political differences and purposes were not out in the open at the start, it was difficult to see why anyone was on one side and not the other, but that "because it is impossible to separate the method used from the aims and purposes, it is natural that those who took sides on the basis of method found themselves on

opposite sides too when purpose and aims were defined.

Finally, slippery as an eel though J was, his politics began to show: first against the paper and its editor and then on the war.

a) The Paper

Now no one thought we had achieved a perfect paper. Quite the contrary. But the new in the paper was the fact that we had a worker editor and he was just summing up his 18 months experience by showing that, basically, with all its faults, the paper moved to the extent it was a weapon in the class struggle; with all its merits it failed to move because its purpose was undefined.

He stressed that it was not that the worker reader didn't understand our purpose but that it was inadequate to what he wanted in this age of crisis where a total transformation is needed, and where he aspires to organization to achieve that aim.

Johnson, on the other hand, said the problem was a journalistic one! The fact that he was trying to reduce our problem to that of "journalism" rather than that of "purpose" does not mean that there is no purpose in his journalism. It is rather that the purpose is alien, "historical," rather than actual or real class struggle. Not only is that "historical" when he deals with history but when he deals with the current class battles of the proletariat. Thus we are suddenly criticized for the absence of the class struggle from Correspondence. Not the only way we were able to have any news on the British dock strike which has been called the greatest since the general strike of 1925, is to rewrite what was in the British press, and not from the SU itself. On the contrary, they, he said, are still talking, months afterward, how best to present it in the paper. That they haven't gotten there yet is no wonder. The proletariat doesn't stand still while the intellectuals discuss. They have acted, have brought the whole question of workers control of production to the forefront, and are now seeking political answers, while J is busy writing or rewriting history.

b) The War

And while he is proceeding to lay down the line to us on the paper, he is off on the test question of any workers organization -- the attitude to war. At one and the same time he has come out with "war is almost a way of life" and we can therefore do nothing about it -- little Rae gave the finest political speech of all on war as "a way of life" and I trust we will publish it afterward -- and yet with the delusion that the H bomb makes possible the stopping of war before it ever breaks out.

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The British people, he says, are opposed to rearming Germany. (Since when did we concern ourselves with the manner in which the big powers pose questions?)

The people of Europe, he continues, are sick and tired of war.

(Watch out when Johnson suddenly becomes so simple in his style that each sentence is a paragraph. He is then not doing what seems to be the case--popularizing an idea. He is slipping in a fundamental revision, transforming some workingclass truth into its opposite.)

From this he leaps to a self-made conclusion: The stewards movement, (Notes not the rank and file production workers on whom our entire politics is based, but the stewards movement in which Stalinists are very active), the stewards movement is ready to intervene, and if they do, the war so far as the British bourgeoisie is concerned is over.

Just that simple!

"Therefore," he concludes, "while struggle for peace at any other time in history was utopian and reactionary, now is the one time we can really stop it."

Now this is the kind of bomb that sent off the German workers who were Socialist off to war for the Kaiser--and the Russians "against Kaiserism" fought for Tsarism, and the whole bloody betrayals of the social pacifists of WW I and "new regimes" in WW II. That the Communists are playing at that game again and the Bevanites in Britain are helping the delusion -- but we never thought this would come from the theoretician of state-capitalism and workers revolt and the new society.

Now this is why he wanted me out of the way. (For the moment I will not concern myself at his underestimation of the American proletariat, and especially the proletariat in our ranks who were raised on some fundamental political principles. For the moment I will let him think that only I, another theoretician, could expose his reactionary line.)

Let us then contrast it to what we said at our last plenum:

"Preparations for war against Russia tomorrow is all-out war against the American workers, today, tomorrow and the day after. That is why the point is not who throws or will throw the first stone. Especially when the first stone will be the H bomb. The point is are you with the people struggling for a new way of life or with the bureaucracies fighting to perpetuate themselves.

"These bureaucracies will spare nothing to keep themselves on top and the workers where they have always been -- at the bottom, carrying the load. Armed with the H-bomb, they are ready to destroy civilization itself rather than allow the new society to emerge."

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"You see there is no in between!" I was talking then about the Trotskyist organizations who "want" the working class to gain power but since they do not believe it is THE ONLY ROAD TO END THE CAPITALIST CHAOS, want "until the day" to be with the labor bureaucracy. As it turns out, it applies more to Johnson who thinks that through the existing order, instead of by its overthrow, you can stop the war.

I continued: "Either you believe that the working people and only they can save civilization from complete chaos. Or you believe they have to be "led," and this thirst for leadership eats you up and throws you back to the old society. You find yourself attached to the old order which from the age of 14 or something you have spoken against."

"In Europe, I went on, this question of war isn't a theoretical question. They have the Red Army within striking distance. Tomorrow it may fall on Berlin or Paris or London.

"The war means the destruction of civilization. There seems no way out--Russia or America, which is worse? You couldn't distinguish one from the other. But now they hear the voice of the American working class. That's what will keep civilization from falling. It's an alternate road, the class road, the working class road."

"The American working class is the answer to whether Western civilization will survive or not. And when they see that they say, "Good, we can fight for Western Civilization and the new society. The American working class is coming to our help." Now that is what is important, -- what is important about the opposition to war, what is important about seeing there is not the slightest trace of chauvinism in our relations to the others, what is important about the way in which we handle such a simple thing, evidently, as Kenya. You begin with the fact that they are already fighting a civil war, not with the fact that Ejeri doesn't know how to write. Even though that shows how you can have 5,000 years of civilization without knowing how to write."

"Without our part and our present we couldn't do what we have to -- whether that be principled resistance to the war or the practical work of publishing a workers paper, every two weeks. So that, while we understand the role of the working people and the fundamental forces of the proletariat and the other revolutionary elements of society; and while we propose to sink ourselves in them completely, because outside of them, for people who understand the world, there is no life; and while we learn from them all the new politics, for the most abstract conceptions of Marxism are in the concrete movement of the American workers today -- that does not in the slightest degree make our own positive, concrete individual role the less."

The final thing I wish to quote is that in talking about the form of the paper, I said: "If it weren't a class question, it wouldn't be serious. Whenever you are in a serious crisis you can be sure the class basis is hidden somewhere. But in an organization like ours, which bases itself totally on the working class, it takes some deep diving to come up with its concrete form."

I myself little thought that the concrete form would be the the appearance of such a treacherous opposition within our midst. But speaking in general, I came so close to the concrete truth that was first to appear 6 months hence, that they feared me and wanted me out of the way.

Now then why did the selected working class majority to the REB and NES, and that includes youth representative, rise up as a man in what they dare call "personal offense." It wasn't me; and it wasn't even only Correspondence -- although everyone could see that that is what would be the ultimate end, the destruction of Correspondence.--

It was more formidable than any single workingclass expression even so fundamental a one as CORRESPONDENCE.

It was nothing less than a question of the perspective of the American revolution.

We had previously made the American working class the foundation of all our thinking and perspectives not alone on the national scene, but as the axis of world perspectives

It had nothing to do with anything subjective, just because we were American, that is.

It had deep objective roots.

The American workingclass was the most technically advanced. It was the most militant in wildcats, with the greatest experience in fighting the labor bureaucracy.

It was the only advanced industrial proletariat that was not shackled down either by the one-party state or the mass parties like LP in England and OP in France and Italy which held the working class in a stranglehold.

The only other place, we argued, where no mass parties shackle the masses and the only obstacle to workers taking matters into their own hands, was Africa. That is why the Kenya situation can teach us so much.

But Africa has no great industrial working class and we would therefore again be confronted even on a graver scale than in Russia, with a proletariat of an industrially undeveloped country taking power and not being able to put into practice the need that the population "to a man" run production and the state. And Africa was not as strategically placed in world affairs as was the US.



So that the American development was integral not alone to America but to the world. It is true that when Johnson left, Kaufman with her wild sweeps, subordinated the whole American movement to that of a single individual. But there was not a whiff of chauvinism in my opposition to her and at that time he supported me. Kaufman, who also knows how to present a position with a great philosophic sweep when the right proletarian political line is given to her, herself expressed it best before this fight made her relegate America to an outpost of Europe. Last August she wrote: "Today more than ever, with the example of Stalinism staring us in the face as a political movement organizing the international from a single centre and Trotskyism as abstract internationalism proposing a single strategy for every country, we have to be aware of the fact that an international movement can ONLY be built up by the specific contribution of each country from its specific traditions and problems."

He gave up more than American perspectives when he developed his pacifist Bovanite-Stalinist position on war-- he blurred the class line also on the European revolution.

#### 3) Marx's Capital

And the inescapable theoretical corollary to this "new politics" is the conception that the American workingclass is backward. They are trying to sneak it in. Watch how it is coming in by the back door.

Ever since her return from Europe Kaufman has been saying that it is not up to us, but Europe to defend Marxism -- from there, not from me, should come the book on Marxism.

Why give up our position first established in 1941 and reestablished in 1951 and periodically thereafter that each generation must reinterpret Marxism for itself, and we are the natural ones to do it?

It is true that it has been put off just as regularly, but then in the 4 years since the break with Trotskyism, this group has turned so far inward that it hardly even noted that that inward turn was away from Marxism.

The isolation from the masses went hand in glove with the isolation from Marxism, but still till the return from Europe, we paid homage to it. Now there are only aside remarks. Why?

This is not just a theoretical question. Watch.

The decision to publish Correspondence we proudly hailed as proof that we were one group that started not with theory, but with the results of theory.

The very method of publication, not from a center but by local committees, we pointed out is a blow to bureaucratism, the belief that only the educated can write, edit, publish.

This venture has uncovered the talents not alone of worker-leaders as editor and chief worker journalist, but writers from the deepest layers such as Jerry Kegg on the labor page, and Ethel on the Negro page.

But suddenly our erstwhile colleagues are ready to scuttle this at the drop of a hat, or I should have said the flip of a pen, from Johnson.

Now the truth is they wouldn't have found it quite so easy to take with them some good rank and filers if during this period we had alongside of this paper the book which has always been the foundation of any serious workingclass movement for the past 100 years. Not for pedantic reason, but because that is at the very root of all our activity, theoretical and practical. Let us stop for a moment and see how America helped shape Marx's Capital. It is in truth the workingclass preparation for their own actions as their action is for his theories.

Marx as you know was a German and early in his youth broke with bourgeois society. He is the founder of modern socialism and contains within himself the three main strands of 19th century thought.

Each of these however he incorporated into his system in a new, a proletarian way. For example, regarding the classical political economy which finally recognized that it was labor that was the source of all wealth, he added: "Not labor, but the living laborer. Once you put in the center of your thoughts, as he is in fact the center of production, you will see at once that you are dealing not with things like wages and profits, but with relations of production, relations of men at the point of production. And it is there where everything must be torn from the roots up if you wish to overcome crisis. Only the workingclass control of production can do that."

So after the manifestoes and the 1848 revolutions in Europe, Marx returns to study and write a book on economics. But even the genius Marx had the limitation of all intellectuals and that is that they can resolve problems only in their heads, whereas where it is necessary to solve them is in life. Until THE WORKERS THEMSELVES WOULD SHOW THE FORM OF REVOLT it was impossible to solve even "simple" theoretical problems.

That is the core of Marxism which is a theory of the liberation of labor from all tyranny and that is why it is not a theoretical question merely. And Capital, hard as Marx worked at it, could not take shape until the workers were once more on the move, which was begun with the great divide in mid-19th century-- the Civil War in the United States.

It is only then when Capital takes shape and it is only out of the actual struggles of the workers for the shortening of the working day that the basic foundation of the historic section of Capital is laid. Right into Capital Marx brings in the early trade unions in the US following the Civil War which phrased the whole question of the working day correctly, instinctively, what it took him so many years to work out.

At the present time with automation being at its most advanced stage here, and the American proletariat being least encumbered by mass parties which shackle it and therefore the spontaneous outburst which are sure to come will first reveal the full stage of liberation from capitalism and the establishment of a new society. There is no better climate to restate the fundamentals of Marxism than here.

The REE feels it is time we put a definite date for that work -- a year from now. It will be done as a collective effort. It will be done, as we do all our work, in the closest collaboration with the third layer, specifically Mary from the youth and workers. That is our long-range perspective, but that does not confront us as an immediate problem at this conference.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM IS the paper and the form of organization, both within the context of this new that the present struggle in the group has revealed: workers as leaders of their own paper and their own organization.

You will be discussing all evening the paper when you hear the report of the editor. The suggested date for reissuance if we decide that is June 17th in honor of the East German revolt.

You will be discussing it again when you hear the finance report of O'Brien tomorrow and take on the responsibility for a foundation fund and for as quick issuance of the paper as possible.

What I wish to spend my time on is the concrete organizational activity and political perspectives governing these.

The central activity will of course be the paper.

But a paper that is not just "for" workers but by the workers that aims to be a weapon in the class struggle must have more workers than those in this room, and not only as readers, but writers, editors, distributors, financiers, their weapon, and their total outlook in opposition to that of the capitalists, the labor bureaucrats, the planners, the leaders, totally theirs and interested in everything.

For the doctor, the lawyer, the professor, the writer, the historian each stand in a certain relationship to the workingclass and must enter as part of this paper. Once the class basis is firmly laid, they not only have a place in it -- nowhere else can they find a solution to their own problems. The crisis of society is total and includes all but the bureaucracies fighting for world power.

So that the paper cannot remain isolated from the working people and the committees that put out the paper must function in a manner where workers feel at home and want to come down.

For them to want to come down they must see something in us, must find a reason for our existence, and for their belonging.

It is not true that because our principle is that what the average man says is what is important and we create a forum for him, that we have no other function.

We are not out to load or order them about and write programs for them to carry out.

But we have a function. It is to clarify workers politics. We don't only tell the worker the workers. We introduce subjects to them. We give a logical organization to his impulses, gripes, desires.

Thus the page which carries his story carries other workers stories and he sees his problem is not an individual one. And the next page carries an editorial, or Two Worlds contains a page of history, or the front page lead article, which, while based on what interests the worker, takes him a step further than his own thoughts led him to. So that this logical organization of his impulses, this form in which his articles are printed, give the story he tells a new quality.

The new quality is our contribution and he recognizes it as such, for he experiences a development in himself which disentangles his proletarian instincts from some of the bourgeois ideas that cling to it because he lives in this society.

We do not edit his thoughts -- we print all he says with all its contradictions out of which ascertain movement flows and propels him forward. But he begins to edit his own. Who didn't sense the difference between what Andy wrote when he first met Milton in the shop and what he wrote afterward? He got them from a few, very bad editing sessions.

When we will have clarified our own form of functioning we will not lose the Andys and Wandas but develop them.

The proof is how we ourselves have developed in this period. People first came alive.

The opposition that saw nothing but what they wanted to see, or were told to see, interpreted the fact that Nelson, not I, was sent to California to debate Neff as an abdication of leadership.

Here are people who talk all the time about "the new, the new", but it was not the new, but Kaufman herself who had to present their very old and unprincipled position. On the other hand it was not I, but Milton, who took on both the philosopher Kaufman and the constitutionalist Dean and made mincemeat out of them both.

And in NY <sup>over</sup> Mary carried a great deal of the burden of the debate and she herself was surprised that she could speak so freely and challenge "the leader Chapin" at every turn, including that of Marxism. In the ranks too, Stallworth here outshone Heinz not because she has as much experience as he, but because the story she told was part of her very organism, her life-- that character Johnson: she was wise to him before intellectuals like me were and she could speak from her heart.

Now that is it in a nutshell: if your own people come alive that way, you have to deliver no exhortations about activity, nor fear isolation-- they will attract other workers who will recognize the genuine proletarian voice as their own. The point is -- can we maintain what we achieved in this period and make ourselves realize all their potentialities.

One of the main points, as I see it, in organizing ourselves from scratch, in learning to function independently, and grow, is to develop that which is already in us and first come to the fore when they saw the workers paper being scuttled.

That means such concrete things as public meetings. Public meetings not by leaders like myself speaking at such length. No, public meetings by workers speaking to other workers as workers out of their own experiences and for their own purposes. What they want to say and when is up to them and the local arranges for it.

You may speak on the CORRESPONDENCE BOOKLET or any issue of Correspondence in order to show what it is we are trying to establish.

Or you can speak on Indignant Heart -- we will surely serialize it in our paper -- and bring out other such workers lives. I would like to hear les's.

Or you can speak on the People of Kenya Speak for Themselves -- we are the ones who politically and financially made it possible and we surely cannot let them take the credit. All Kaufman did was run it into the ground and so limit it to the churches that this great work is hardly known to the Detroit proletariat, much less so in New York or LA where not even the local knows what was done as they never gave Arden a chance to report.

No, that book is ours, and we can have a talk on it, and link it up with what we are attempting to do on the Negro page -- the more I think of it the more I think Stallworth could make a very substantial talk on it, and really get some activity around it and around the page that is to be for which backlog should immediately accumulate.

In a word, workers must take the lead in building their own organization and its paper, and it must begin right here with talk as to how you mean to do it, and the day after you adjourn. Workers taking the lead in every aspect of the work, from getting a hall to speaking in it has to be our foundation.

You know the last thing anybody ever talked about in the other group is building the organization. You would think that because we broke with the concept of a party to lead and thirst for no such thing, that therefore there is no reason for our being.

It is time surely we broke with this concept for without breaking with it we will be as isolated as they and as doomed to failure. Milton said that one reason we remained isolated was that Johnson drove us to it. He, for example, had to break with all his friends. Well, that is over.

Watkins said when a worker first joins an organization he always brings people around. You have a purpose and want to explain it to your shopmates or friends in general. But after a few meetings, and a lot of petty-bourgeois with their big talk dominate them, those people leave. Although you yourself stick it out, still you are not so sure about the purpose any longer and you stop inviting your friends to come down.

Now what is it that will bring them down? What is it we represent? How can we elicit a working-class response? I don't mean just leaders of workers but the rank and file. I mean the leaders and the rank and file of the workers we have moved as one against the unprincipled opposition and were not afraid "to go it alone". Now how can we build further, with the same originality and force that they did in the factional struggle.

Each has brought something different and that is good. Some of us have been around since 1917, others since the CIO, others came from the Trotskyist groupings, but—as Milton put it at the last plenum—he doesn't consider that he learned politics only in the movement, not if politics means the class struggle for that matter of fighting the capitalists just came with his being what he was, where he was. It was the conditions under which he lived contrasted to those he aspired to; it was this revolt against what is that brought him to others who thought like him. So it wasn't a question of learning to hate the system of oppression from the politicians. It was a question of hammering out a path himself and finding others like him on the road.

That is true. But what comes naturally to the workers comes only through hard study and thought to the intellectual and it is the combination of the workers and intellectuals that has preserved the historic development, a sort of knowing of the working-class.

This kind of grouping like ours has persisted through the 100 years struggle of the factory proletariat. It always appears, whether the working-class has founded mass parties of its own or not.

What is new about us is that we here today who represent this historic continuity reveals itself to be in its majority proletarian. We have often complained openly that we had proletarians in our group, but we never had a proletarian tendency, a force that dominates the activity of the group, the thoughts and concepts—the mentality—of the group. The test will be this: will the organization be the framework in which proletarians feel at home, can function and grow?

The organization has to be a place where workers can come and feel at home, and the paper a place where they not only can but want to write.

It all boils down to this: can the activity and attitudes achieved in this period be maintained for day to day functioning? Each one must speak out and we will see now and test after. But here we must begin, establish our routines, make sure the form of the organization will be what workers want, what they aspire to in aspiring to a new society.



The youth must speak up. I cannot tell them what or how--it is long since I have been a youth and times are different. They have to tell me.

One thing I can say: The unanimity of their vote against the opposition is no accident. The youth have always been in the vanguard of the new society, and this has now not been lessened, but reinforced.

Everyone, I hope, will speak up, including the including, including those not members. If there is one thing that we have learned from the bureaucratization, degeneration and transformation into opposite of the Russian Revolution, and it is this: unless the party checks its work by the non-party masses, it is doomed.

I want to repeat that because that must be axis of our work, that defines our day as distinct from 1917, as the continuation of what Lenin could only hint at in 1923: unless the party--and that includes such a small grouping as us because it is the principle, not the number that counts-- unless the party checks its work by non-party masses, that is to say, the outside, it is doomed.

We are a serious group and we mean business. The point is to get down to it. The historic necessity of a group like ours not out "to lead" but only to clarify workers politics is not in history alone, nor in the fact that we will bring Marxism theoretically up to date, but in the daily class struggle, beginning with the form of our own committees and the paper. Workers learn not through books, but through their way of life, and the people with whom they associate with naturally. What will our people look like to them?

One final word. The REB felt that for the time being, since this is not a convention, but only a conference, and since we do not yet know ourselves in this new situation, how we will measure up to our tasks, that we continue to function as we are, with no changes in REB, NEB, or local editing committees. However, we will need to bring into the center at least an organizational secretary.

At the same time, since we are unable to support an editor full time but want a worker as editor, we now propose to have two workers as editors: Nelson and Milton, so that the work can be done after factory hours and each can supplement the other in the great responsibility. All other work will be done on a voluntary basis, including that of the chairman, and any technical assistance as well.

That does not mean that we can go without a foundation fund. That is of the essence, but I am not introducing it here, but leaving it for the finance session to O'Brien, so that we can discuss first of all the political organization and perspectives and once we have laid the foundation of those, proceed to the finances to carry out our political tasks. I'm sure everyone has thought hard since the break of what we mean, has many thoughts of how to build. Let's begin there.

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APPENDIX

Dear L.,

Two days ago for all practical purposes the struggle that started in our group has ended. I can't see that there is any more room for discussion within the group for those that have definitely made up their mind to go with the REB minority.

For some in the group it has been a hard thing to understand. Especially the newer ones. It will do no good to bewail the fact that we like others before us who apparently stood together have split into two groups. The fact is that there were differences all the time. They were well hidden. It has only been in the struggle that we have been able to see them. Things that made us doubtful before, uneasy, are much clearer today.

We said in the beginning of our existence that if we would remain a small group, unable to attract the workers to the group, we too, would go the way of all the others. We noted this fact, pointed to it. The overwhelming majority of the group was not of working class background. In any serious dispute, the differences would be of a class difference.

The actual political differences and purposes were not out in the open at the start. They are not all our now. Even they would deny today what tomorrow will show.

I want to show you this in detail, but later on. First of all I want to deal with the method used because this is how it first appeared. They first showed their hand in this. And because it is impossible to separate the method used from the aims and purposes it is only natural that those who first took sides on the basis of the methods used found themselves on opposite sides too when the purposes and aims were more definite.

Now Leo, you and I had certain experiences together in the early development of the LA group. We had a rich and fruitful experience. We built a group. We established certain principles. We developed certain people. And not in a catering fashion. Think back on the experience. On some of these experiences we acted on instinct alone. And instinct is not something that is not based on living experiences. It is. Sometimes it is difficult to put down on paper, but it is there. And as a thread running through the whole thing was a certain method, maybe not always certain and definite, but a method and a working class method. I have often thought of the fact that while I was there, and I don't mean this in any personal sense either, that we gained and grew and never lost a single member. That was due too to the fact that certain methods were used.

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Now on their method in this dispute. Tone is a part of method. Running like a red thread through all of J's letters is this tone. One of insolence, arrogance, insults one on top of the other, coupled with this an attempt at bribery, vulgar in its approach to the chairman of the group. Nothing is more like the Moscow trial than this attempt to make the chairman "confess." And then in the same breath the gall to say that she could come back and have her position with the unanimous consent of all. And to top this the conception that after all this she would have the increased respect of all. She would have the respect of no one. She would not be a leader but a housebroken puppet. There are numerous cases of this in recent Russian history.

There is another aspect of method and that is shown in procedures. For an organization to function normally you have to have routines and procedures. Certain leaders and certain bodies and committees have certain duties and responsibilities. These are established through conventions, plenums and local group meetings, etc. Now if we become dissatisfied there are proper methods to change this. Never in this group was this challenged. Reread the proletarianization bulletin on organization. These are fundamental ideas and actually very elemental ones. To bypass these procedures is to show contempt for the organization in general and the particular committee or person involved in particular. It not only shows contempt, but it shows the faction or person doing this act contrary to the procedures is setting themselves above the decisions of the membership.

In this dispute there have been so many violation of this on the part of the minority that you cannot say it was the irresponsible act of an individual. It is part of a method again. Letters that were the property of the editor were given to Pound to do with as he saw fit. The memo on the paper by J says so explicitly. Letters that were the property of the chairman of the group or of the REB were first shown to either Kaufman or Pound. These are not the fraternal actions of a faction motivated by a desire to build. They are the actions of a group that is determined to either control or destroy. That is not the way to build for a new society.

There has been much talk by J particularly on the development of leaders. I haven't thought this through but I am highly suspicious of the methods used here. I have always been disturbed by the element of paternalism and catering in the group. Again back to IA and our early experience together. We developed people. That is a fact. We never put them up on a pedestal. S for example. If anyone was ever neglected for years she was. J spoke of it at times, but never did one single solitary thing to remedy it except to talk about it. S always had an instinct for organization. We recognized it and put it to use and developed it. We started it by putting her in charge of B. Do you know how I had to protect her from individuals in the group? And in her position as chairman in charge of the B project. There was constant sniping from S in particular and N at times. You are not aware of the fact that I had to fight to get her sent to the third layer school in NY. That I ought a little hell for doing just that. That at an REB meeting in NY J himself stated that I had

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done her irreparable harm. And to you, L., too. Finch for years was neglected. Hartnell was put on a pedestal. She was neglected. J takes a great deal of the credit for her development. He deserves it. Especially the part that has to do with her corruption. But the IA local took it on themselves to put her on part time basis to coordinate work on B between IA and Frisco. It was my writing letters to her and encouraging her to write that she did so. I have the letters to prove it.

Take the case of S--. He didn't do so well in Frisco. We got him down to LA. Do you remember what job we gave him first. On the finance committee. Some people thought it was crazy. A person so weak in that particular field. But he was put on a committee with two of the strongest people we had in that respect, M-- and yourself. He functioned better than he had ever done before. And he didn't hurt the committee at all. In all of those examples there was never any element of paternalism. And there was development of individuals.

Now there is another way to develop individuals. It is contrary to working class principles because it tends to corrupt people. Hartnell is the most famous example in our group. A brilliant young man. J said it so many times I can't remember. Then in the same breath he calls him the most corrupt intellectual in the group. For a year or so he tried to drive him out of the group. He was subject to one of the most brutal whippings I have ever seen at a plenum here in Detroit. The latest chapter on this concerns a document Hartnell wrote on the civil war. I read it. Thought it at most a modest piece of writing. Milton couldn't even wade through it. He told me. J calls it the greatest piece of writing since Marx's 18th Brumaire. This is the old buildup again, only to tear him down at a later time. This method in the case of Hartnell is to make him completely subservient to him. It is a very corrupting method.

Take the case of Cartwright. A brilliant high school student. The type that never took a book home to study and yet made the highest grades. A person in the movement all her life, from the age of 12. Daughter of radical parents, Stalinists too. Brought up in the highly politicalized atmosphere of NY.

How much did she ever participate in the building of the group in LA? She was always being relieved from the group life for one reason or another. She was J's secretary when he was in LA. She was writing on the Woman question. Other women were too, but didn't get all the relief she did. She was picked to be the prize student at the school in NY. When she was on the B committee she was always trying to unseat Garrigan in favor of one she had picked. When she was on the newspaper committee, the nincompoop one, she tried to make it a rival to the regular executive committee. Now suddenly this ambitious, articulate young lady becomes a representative of the inarticulate masses. A third layer.

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At the school she became the chief prosecutor of Selow along with another brilliant young college student, Yvon, who leaves us a month later. Do you want to know what some real working class women thought of that episode at the school. Stallworth and Frazier. It sickened them, the method used, I'm talking about.

There is still another chapter to this story and maybe more. She is put on full time in the field as a sub-getter. After taking the groups' money for months she is asked for a report. She asks for another month to write the report. I don't know what she did to build the group during this period. We have never received this report. She is now overseas engaged in more mischief. Does the local know this? Do you see the anti-working class method involved in this type of development?

Finch is another example. Not as ambitious perhaps. Of a more pleasant nature perhaps. For a long time neglected. Then built up, is being used now. If she kicks up her heels at a future date she will be torn down too. Incidentally, this representative of the inarticulate masses is a college student with three years to her credit in Hunter college. I'm not against education. I respect it, want it. But I don't want some one to foist off on me a fake diamond.

I've written about method from the point of view of tone, procedures, the development of individuals. Style is another part of method.

Lenin said that which distinguished the proletariat was the simplicity of style, the clarity, the directness. This is natural to the worker. In the struggle for a new society that is what is needed. It is not because he is dumb and stupid he writes and talks with directness. The problems that he is faced with can be conquered no other way.

The element of style has not been obvious in the faction struggle, but it is there in the writings of the minority, particularly J and Kaufman. It is very obvious in the writing of Hartnell on the Civil War. And it is obvious that the minority wants this type of article to have a prominent place in the paper. One of the chief characteristics of this style is the brilliant generalizations sprinkled throughout their writings. Generalizations without basis or fact. Or without the reader learning anything from it. This style fascinates the reader or listener. It overawes him. It does not touch. Instead it dulls his responses.

One time I told J in regard to his lectures. I notice that the people that come up to you after your talks are not the rank and file. But the educated. The leaders of the church or groups to which he was talking. You are talking over their heads. I did not say you fascinate those petty-bourgeois. You overawe the workers. But that is what I thought. He at the time paid tribute to my sharp criticism. Said that this native revolutionary instinctively noticed this. But the style he used did not change much. I have ideas on style which I'll write down, but not here. I've said enough on this and this letter is already much longer than I had expected.

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I wrote a letter to Garrigan and W--. Maybe they'll show it to you, where I take up the aim of the paper as J sees it. The method is connected very intimately with the purpose. J quotes, and it is significant that it is a Stalinist he quotes, that the aim of the paper should be to make the reader aware of his place as a maker of history. Counterpose to that the purpose of the paper as a weapon in the class struggle and you have a difference in class outlook. Now it is possible to have the first aim one of the purposes of the paper, but at all times secondary to the primary aim of the paper being a weapon in the class struggle. I'm not against workers being aware of their place as a maker of history. It is necessary in their development as a political person. But to make that the aim as the minority proposes to do is to make the paper an instrument of social research.

A worker is not primarily interested in studying his life, he is interested in changing it. Over the past 18 months we have heard of the various purposes like the paper is to give the workers a chance to express himself. We were trying to find out what workers thought was another purpose. Now all these purposes fit together and the jig saw puzzle fits together. There were opposing purposes all along, but they were hidden. But they are now out in the open. And they are class differences. The workers here in Detroit have for months been heading in one direction on the purpose of the paper. J., Kaufman and the minority have been heading in another direction. Over two months ago I wrote to England for an article on a dockers strike which developed organizational forms which were very successful in fighting both the government and labor bureaucracies. I said I thought American workers could learn and use these methods. You know the article I got. One on the frustrations of a machinist and what it means to him as his place as a maker of history. You see what is primary to the minority!

Yours,  
Harpor